



ECKERD COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT & DEAN OF FACULTY

May 11, 2011

Dear Members of the Luce Foundation Review Committee:

Eckerd College requests consideration of an invitation to apply for the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE). Eckerd College has strong programs in East Asian Studies and Environmental Studies and a wealth of faculty experience leading student study groups and performing field research in East and Southeast Asia. The College has been especially focused in recent years on expanding its international opportunities to underserved groups such as science students, who have comparatively low participation rates in study abroad, and immersive language and cultural studies programs due to their demanding program requirements. In 2008, the College received a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation's International Research Experience for Scientists (NSF-IRES) program, which enabled us to send six marine and/or environmental science majors to work in laboratories at Xiamen University or Hong Kong Baptist University. Based on this successful experience, which is continuing on a smaller scale in summer 2011 at the College's expense, we are interested and well-prepared to develop a more interdisciplinary, culturally immersive experience for a wider range of students and faculty.

The Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment is an excellent opportunity for us to build upon, as well as expand the depth and breadth of prior initiatives. It will benefit our institution in several meaningful ways. First, it will bring together faculty from numerous disciplines within the College to share their research interests and find points of connection and collaboration for enrichment of the curriculum. This has already begun to happen during the preliminary discussions for this letter of inquiry, presaging much deeper and more exciting curriculum developments over the hoped-for years of grant support. Second, the rich interdisciplinary supportive web of involved faculty will provide our students with wide-ranging yet cohesive learning and research experiences. Third, it will create innovative, collaborative development opportunities for faculty, both on campus and abroad. Fourth, it will allow us to strengthen our collaboration with partner institutions in Asia, increasing communication and exchanges between faculty and students on both sides of the Pacific.

Eckerd College is an independent, nationally-ranked, co-educational undergraduate liberal arts college, originally established in 1958 as Florida Presbyterian College. Eckerd offers 38 majors and 41 minors to 1,840 residential students who hail from 43 states and 35 countries. In 2003, in recognition of the quality of its overall educational program, Eckerd College was granted a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, one of the youngest institutions to be so recognized; since then, the College has inducted 75 members into the society. The academic excellence of the College is also reflected in the number of nationally recognized scholarships and fellowships its students have won. Between 2000 and 2009, 70 students/graduates were honored by national fellowship programs including the National Science Foundation, American Society for Microbiology for Undergraduate Research, and national scholarship programs including Goldwater, Fulbright, Marshall, Rotary Foundation, Truman, Udall, EPA-STAR, and Gilman. In addition, Eckerd's students have won 33 Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarships (managed by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Commerce); in 2011, the College holds the national record for total awards won.

Eckerd College has one of the strongest Asian Studies programs of any liberal arts institution in the southeastern United States. Its interdisciplinary program in East Asian Studies offers a major and minor and supports both Chinese and Japanese language up to advanced levels on campus. More than a dozen faculty members make Asian Studies a primary or occasional area of research and teaching interest, including seven with significant field experience in Southeast Asia and three who have done research in India. We maintain a China Study Center at Xiamen University in Fujian, China, and have direct exchange partner universities in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Thailand. The Asia program has been the recipient of numerous major grants, including Planning, Faculty Development, and Challenge Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities during the 1990s, and grants from the Luce Fund for Asian Studies and Freeman Foundation Undergraduate Asian Studies Funding Initiative during the past decade. Eckerd helped found and has continued to maintain active memberships in both the ASIANetwork consortium and Asian Studies Development Program

since the 1990s. Our required freshman core sequence, taught by all faculty, includes influential Asian texts, which have become an integral part of the college's intellectual discourse.

Eckerd's waterfront campus, located at the southern tip of Pinellas County, is well placed to host its teaching and research programs in Marine Science and Environmental Studies. The Environmental Studies major, one of the College's largest majors, provides students a broad understanding of the environment and the tools needed to solve problems, emphasizing depth of knowledge in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The Environmental Studies major was selected by Fiske in 2010 as one of the ten best undergraduate Environmental Studies programs of any college in the United States. Eckerd College's location in the densely populated coastal and urban Tampa Bay area has led to a program focus on coastal management and urban ecology, as well as in international environmental issues. All incoming freshmen engage environmentally-related texts in the freshmen core sequence, and are required to take a course addressing environmental issues in order to graduate. "Environment" is the college's official theme for incoming freshmen and college-sponsored events for the 2011-2012 academic year.

The faculty resources that ensure the breadth and depth of our programs are numerous and varied. They include the following:

David J. Bryant (Ph.D. Christian Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary) is Professor of Religious Studies. His recent research and publications focus on the intersection of religions and ecology, as do two of his upper-division courses, one examining Western religions and the other focusing on Asian religions.

Jing Chen (Ph.D. Political Science, Princeton University 2011/forthcoming) will become an Assistant Professor of Political Science beginning in Fall 2011. A native speaker of Chinese, her research interests include state-society and central-local relations in China, China's foreign policies, as well as international relations in East Asia. She had done research on China's petition system and its effect on central-local relations and multilateralism in China's policy towards the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Andrew Chittick (Ph.D. Chinese History, University of Michigan 1997), Professor of East Asian Humanities, directs the East Asian Studies program and has managed major grants from the Luce and Freeman Foundations. He is proficient in modern and classical Chinese and has led student groups to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia six times in the last decade, including serving as director of Eckerd's China Study Center at Xiamen University in fall 2010. His research is on the local history of communities in southern China, dragon boat racing, maritime trade and nautical technology, and historical ties between China and Southeast Asia.

Kent Curtis (Ph.D. Environmental History, University of Kansas 2001), Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, is an environmental historian with field experience in sustainable agriculture and research interests in food culture and practices. As part of the Campus Food Garden, Curtis is working with students to develop a global foods garden to grow exotic vegetables locally for consumption in the campus cafeteria.

David S. Duncan (Ph.D. Marine Science, University of South Florida 1997), continuing Assistant Professor of Marine Science and Geosciences, has served as co-P.I. on the NSF-IRES grant focusing on undergraduate research in Xiamen, China and Hong Kong. He has traveled to Asia four times with students, and developed summer internships with eight different faculty at Xiamen University and Hong Kong Baptist University. His research deals with paleoceanography and tropical marine and coastal geology.

Denise Flaherty (Ph.D. Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology, Emory University 2000) is an Assistant Professor of Biology. She teaches the course "Neurotoxins in the Environment" and engages teams of students in her research. She uses the model genetic organism *C. elegans* as a screening tool to research the physiological effects of environmental pesticide residue exposure. Her goal is to understand the environmental and human health impact of pesticides and other anthropogenic chemicals used worldwide.

Edward Grasso (Ph.D. Management Science, Virginia Tech 1982), Professor of Management, has led numerous trips to Asia over the last twenty years, and served as the director of Eckerd's China Study Center at Xiamen University in spring 2007 and 2008. He has taught "Total Quality Environmental Management" and "Environmental Computer Modeling" and researches business practices in Japan, China, and Southeast Asia.

David Hastings (Ph.D. Chemical Oceanography, University of Washington 1995) is Associate Professor of Marine Science and Chemistry. His research focuses on using minor and trace elements in the marine environment as a tool for understanding the history of past climate change and marine biogeochemical processes, as well as the history and severity of anthropogenic contamination. He has done extensive research on the paleoceanography of the South China Sea.

Nancy G. Janus (Ed.D. Counseling Psychology, University of Massachusetts 1981), Professor of Human Development, studies Human Development in international contexts. She has traveled with students on five occasions to Southeast Asia to do faculty-mentored student research on children's issues and other social issues. She has published on mental health services in Cambodia and participated in three faculty development programs on Asia through the East-West Center.

Michael Jerryson (Ph.D. Religious Studies, University of California Santa Barbara 2008) is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. He has language proficiency in Thai and Sanskrit, with training in Hindi, Urdu, Bahasa Melayu, Mongolian, and Japanese. In addition to teaching at Mahidol University in Thailand, he has conducted research through the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore and conducted fieldwork in Thailand and Singapore to examine the role of religion in conflicts within pluralistic communities, including clashes between government and religious groups, and environmental groups and corporations.

Jeannine M. Lessmann (Ph.D. Oceanography and Coastal Science, Louisiana State University 1998), Assistant Professor in Marine Science and Biology. Her research focuses on the restoration ecology of intertidal (mangrove and salt marsh) and nearshore (seagrass) marine ecosystems in a variety of geographic locations in the USA, Mexico, and Denmark (North Sea). She will be leading a Winter Term student group to Malaysia in January 2012 to explore environmental and cultural issues.

Polina Maciejczyk (Ph.D. Analytical Chemistry, University of Maryland 2000), Assistant Professor of Chemistry, has extensive experience in atmospheric chemistry and ambient air pollution. She has led and participated in multi-year, multi-institutional field sampling campaigns to study pollutants in urban and rural areas of the north-eastern US. Her specialty is analysis of metal constituents of particulates, source apportionment modeling of particulate matter, and health effects of pollution at the cellular level.

Eileen B. Mikals-Adachi (Ph.D. Japanese Literature, Ochanomizu University 1992) coordinates the college's Japanese Program. She received a Japan Foundation Grant for the curriculum development project, "An Environment-Conscious Approach to Japanese Studies." She lived in Tokyo for 22 years and taught at Ochanomizu, Chuo, and International Christian Universities, and is a volunteer translator for the NPO Japan for Sustainability (JFS). She has traveled to Japan five times with Eckerd students. Fluent in Japanese, her research focuses on the influence of classical notions of spirituality and nature on contemporary works.

Alison Ormsby (Ph.D. Environmental Studies, Antioch University New England 2003), Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, teaches courses on topics such as wildlife policy and environmental education. Her most recent research has been on sacred forests in Asia and Africa. She has conducted research in Thailand in collaboration with the Biodiversity Research and Training Institute, and has taken students for field study in Malaysia. She has twenty years of environmental field experience in forty countries.

Jing Shen (Ph.D. Chinese and Comparative Literature, Washington University in St. Louis), Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, is a native speaker of Chinese and runs the college's Chinese language program. Her research is on Chinese fiction, theater and visual culture, including films with an environmental perspective. She has led a group of Eckerd College students to China to research Chinese cinema, theater, and television.

Claire A. Stiles (Ph.D. Health Counseling, University of Florida 1987) is Professor of Human Development. Through her participation in a two-year, NEH Faculty Development Seminar Series she developed expertise in traditional Chinese medicine and health practices, and more recently in modern Chinese culture and environmental health concerns. She has traveled with students to China twice in the past five years, including serving as director of Eckerd's China Study Center at Xiamen University in spring 2009.

Joel Thompson (Ph.D., Geomicrobiology, Syracuse University 1989), Associate Professor of Marine Science and Geosciences, led the first student research group for the NSF International Research Experiences for Students (IRES) grant to Xiamen University and Hong Kong Baptist University. His field research integrates biology and geology in the study of aquatic environments, both freshwater and marine. He has worked in both pristine and polluted aquatic environments in the US, Canada and the Bahamas.

In addition to the named resources, Eckerd has an exceptionally strong program in International Education, with three full-time staff members. The College maintains overseas study centers in London, China, and Mexico, as well as nearly two dozen direct-exchange programs with partner institutions all over the world. The Office runs a wide variety of January-term professor-led academic international programs. In fall 2009, the Institute for International Education (IIE) ranked Eckerd 4th in the nation for liberal arts colleges on the percentages of undergraduates studying abroad. International Business and International Relations & Global Affairs are among the five largest of our majors. This semester the Dean of Faculty has launched a new initiative to develop an International Center to help coordinate the multiplicity of current international endeavors, to facilitate the organization of and funding for new endeavors, and to encourage broader community participation in formal and informal programs.

Eckerd College has partnered directly with the following Asian institutions/organizations, or has faculty who have collegial connections and/or work/research experiences at these:

Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian Province, PRC. Eckerd has well over a decade of experience working with counterparts at Xiamen University. Since 2007, the interactions have housed our China Study Center, to which we send a

faculty director and a student group for one semester each year, as well as serving as one of the two hosting institutions for Eckerd students and faculty participating in summer research under the NSF-IRES grant. Numerous Eckerd faculty (Brooks, Chittick, Duncan, Grasso, Stiles, and Thompson) have been involved in one or more of these programs and have been to Xiamen, often for extended periods. Selected faculty contacts that have resulted from these programs include:

Dai Minhan, Prof., Chemical Oceanography; Dean, College of Oceanography & Environmental Science

Chen Mingru, Professor of Biological Oceanography

Yi Lin, Associate Professor of Sociology/School of Public Affairs

Liao Shaolian, Professor of Economics and Deputy Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies

Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, is a comprehensive private university established in 1956; it has been an exchange partner with Eckerd College for several decades and has served as the second hosting institution for Eckerd students and faculty participating in summer research under the NSF-IRES grant. Four Eckerd faculty (Brooks, Duncan, Grasso, and Thompson) have developed substantial research relationships with the following HKBU faculty:

Ricky NS Wong, Professor of Biology

Chris KC Wong, Professor of Biology and Associate Director, Croucher Institute of Environmental Sciences

Yan Liang, Assistant Professor of Biology and Environmental Sciences

Jianwen Qiu, Assistant Professor of Biology

Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, is considered Thailand's top-ranked university; it is especially strong in fields such as Public Health and Environment & Resource Management. Two Eckerd faculty members (Jerryson and Ormsby) have worked closely in relevant fields with counterparts at Mahidol. They are:

Sompod Srikosamatara, Associate Professor of Biology/Ecology & Conservation

Sorrayut Ratanapojnard, Lecturer, Biology/Environmental Education

Marja-Leena Heikkila Horn, Associate Professor, Social Sciences

National University of Singapore (NUS) is one of Asia's premier academic institutions with numerous strengths, especially in sciences and Southeast Asian Studies. One Eckerd faculty member (Jerryson) has worked extensively with faculty members there. They are:

Michael Montesano, Assistant Professor, Southeast Asian Studies Programme; visiting Research Scholar at the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

Pattana Kitiarsa, Assistant Professor, Southeast Asian Studies

The Biodiversity Research and Training Program (BRT), Thailand, was established by Thailand's national Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC) under the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), together with the Thailand Research Fund (TRF). The BRT provides support and funding for research into and management of Thailand's biodiversity resources. Professor Ormsby has worked with this organization when she conducted fieldwork in Thailand.

Kagawa University/Takamatsu Sister City Program, Japan. Eckerd has been an integral part of the sister-city program between St. Petersburg and Takamatsu, the "marine capital of the Seto Inland Sea." Professor Mikals-Adachi has recently strengthened our ties with Kagawa University.

Atsushi Taira, Professor of Education, Kagawa University; Vice-Chair of Takamatsu Sister City Committee

Japan For Sustainability (JFS), Tokyo, Japan. Established in 2002, this NPO provides information on developments and activities in Japan that lead toward sustainability.

Junko Edahiro, Chief Executive

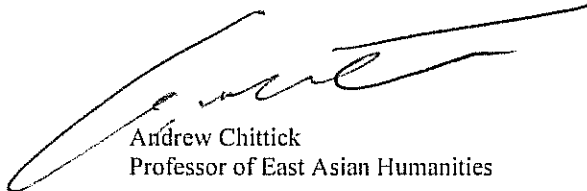
In conclusion, we would like to stress the substantial institutional commitment to this initiative. In addition to the new initiative for an International Center, the Dean of Faculty has also indicated her willingness to support the development of new courses/collaborative endeavors by giving release time during Winter Term, and to support faculty enhancement opportunities with funding to explore international endeavors. The excitement and engagement among faculty is evident from the long list of faculty who immediately expressed interest in being included in this letter of inquiry and who will be actively involved in the drafting of subsequent proposals. We are grateful to the Luce Foundation for making such an exciting initiative available to us.

Sincerely,



Betty M. Stewart

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty



Andrew Chittick

Professor of East Asian Humanities